

2021-2022 School Year

Plan for Opening and Providing In-Person Instruction

September 2021

Preface

Robert C. Parker School educates children ages PreK-8th grade.

For the past year and a half, COVID-19 provided disruption in many aspects of life in our community. At Parker, online instruction was implemented quickly in March 2020 and grew more and more effective over time. With that said, all members of the community felt the loss of in person instruction. For the 2020-21 school year, we were fortunate enough to be open all year and provide almost uninterrupted in-person instruction in grades PreK-8. This year, we are also planning for and striving to have every student on campus every day.

Parker has several characteristics that make in-person learning somewhat less cumbersome for us than for many schools. First is our small size. Our building has more space per person than is typical for a school. Our entire campus has a tremendous amount of space as we sit on 77 acres. Plans for fall include having students spend time outdoors both for recess, learning and eating.

Second, families and employees are highly conscientious and we recognize that this may be the most important factor in reducing transmission. Wearing masks and maintaining social and physical distance both on and off campus, screening attentively from home, and keeping in communication with the school administration will go a long way in protecting every member of the community.

Third, our building will enable us to separate the school by division: preK, lower school, and middle school. We will maintain cohorts separated by division.

This plan follows the headings and categories of the *Interim Guidance for In-Person Instruction at Pre-K to Grade 12 Schools During the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency*, released on August 16, 2021 by the NYS Dept of Education. Revisions will be made to the plan as guidance is updated, and this plan may be amended with additional information provided by state or local health departments, and/or by the NYS Dept of Education, especially the Office for Religious and Independent Schools.

I. PEOPLE

A. Social Distancing and Face Covering

Social Distancing

Our one story building has been divided into areas: early childhood, lower school, and middle school. For indoor learning, students and their teachers will be almost exclusively in the area of the building for that division.

Visitors, including parents, will be limited to only those necessary and by appointment.

We have no stairwells. Our schedule requires little hallway “passing,” and is designed to limit the number of students in the hallway at a time.

Classrooms have been measured and student seating is designated 3ft apart.

Face Coverings

All students will wear masks upon arrival and into their classrooms and for as much of the day as possible while indoors, with the exception of eating.

Social Distancing for Certain Activities

As long as weather permits, students will have PE class outdoors. Our gym has ample space for all classes to be 6 to 12ft apart when being indoors is necessary.

Singing will be allowed outdoors with the students placed 6ft apart and indoors with masks on.

Space Configurations

Student desks will be a combination of individual and group tables for the new school year, allowing for tables large enough to separate students by 3 to 6ft.

When students travel to specialists, the schedule will permit these rooms to have surface cleaning and disinfection and to be aired out between classes.

PreK and LS cubbies will be assigned in a manner to separate the classes, and teachers will regulate student presence in the hallways.

Middle school student lockers will be assigned in areas by grades and teachers will regulate and schedule students in the hallways.

Schedules

Parker's schedule will allow students to stay with a cohort by grade (or multi-age class in grades 1-4, and 6-7).

Block scheduling will minimize middle school students passing in hallways.

Signage

Parker has signage to remind students, employees and visitors about COVID-19 safety and procedures.

B. Gatherings

Meals

Parker does not have a cafeteria or food service. PreK and LS students will eat outside as weather permits and in classrooms with social distancing and closely monitored by teachers.

Middle school students will eat by grade, outdoors when weather conditions permit and in classrooms with social distancing of 6 foot spacing between students.

Small Spaces

Fortunately, Parker has few small spaces. The two that need consideration:

1. The Administration Suite

Everyone must wear a mask when entering the admin suite, although the employees who have offices there may remove their mask when working in their office alone, should they choose.

When using the copy machine, one person at a time may be in the room, wearing a mask. If waiting for the copy machine, employees may wait in the lobby.

Employees needing to have a meeting with an administrator in the admin suite should work with the administrator to see if the meeting can happen in a larger space (outdoors, library, A102 are some possibilities.)

Employees who have offices in the administration suite are strongly encouraged to open windows and increase airflow several times per day.

2. Special Education Room

This room is small but does have two doors, an air filter, and windows in the adjacent hallway. The teacher will limit the number of students joining her in the room and use the adjoining library for more space as necessary.

Faculty and Staff Meetings

Meetings of the full faculty will be held in a large, well ventilated space which allows for 3 ft spacing.

Ventilation

Parker is fortunate to have little ductwork, with radiant heat floors in almost the entire building. The Discovery Center has forced air, and a large number of windows for ventilation. The gym has an air handler that does not interface with any other part of the building.

Classrooms have many windows as do the hallways across from classrooms in the early childhood and lower school.

Fans will be placed in hallways and classrooms to increase air flow out of the classrooms and into the building.

Schedules will permit airing out of the rooms when students 1) are taken outdoors, 2) go to specialists and 3) at the end of the school day.

C. Operational Activity

Cohorts

Parker's class groupings naturally fall into cohorts. For the 2021-22 school year the MS will consist of grades 5-8 with grades 5 and 8 each being a separate cohort. Grades 6 and 7 will be combined in some classes and will constitute a cohort. In LS the three cohorts are K, 1-2 and 3-4. PreK will have two classes - three-year-olds and four-year-olds - which will each be considered a cohort.

In-Person Instruction

Parker has a small student body and enough space in the building for in-person instruction for all students every day. By making use of multiple entrances and curbside drop off, we will minimize the clustering of students in the hallway before school.

Movement and Commerce

PreK and K-2nd grade student drop off will be at the front entrance. 3-4th grade and MS drop off will be at the side door (formerly known as the PPU door). Under supervision, 3rd & 4th grade students will follow the sidewalk along the side of the building and enter through the front entrance.

Deliveries

Many deliveries can be brought to the vestibule in the lobby. When necessary, deliveries can be left inside the front door at the lobby. The front desk personnel can maintain an excess of 6ft from the front door at all times.

Faculty/Staff Entrances and Exits

Parker has a small number of employees. Administrators, Specialists, PreK and LS faculty will use the front door. MS teachers will use the side entrance door.

Shared Objects

In LS and MS, family back-to-school supply lists have been designed to allow students to have individual materials to a much greater extent than usual. These will be labeled and stored and students will bring their own materials to specialist classes as well.

In PreK, students will be spaced and density in learning centers decreased. Some materials will not be used this year because they are more difficult to clean (eg. stuffed animals, certain dramatic play materials). The teachers will track and store shared materials to let any microbes die between uses.

II. PLACES

A. Personal Protective Equipment

The school has a supply of paper and cloth face coverings. Employees and students are permitted and encouraged to bring reusable face coverings to school each day. Cloth face coverings must be laundered daily at home. Reusable masks should be at least two layers, tightly fitted to gapping, and cover the nose, mouth, and chin.

B. Hygiene, Cleaning and Disinfection

Hygiene

Nightly cleaning is done by the school's custodian and includes disinfecting surfaces.

Surfaces also need to be maintained during the school day. Responsible parties include all adult members of the school community.

Lobby, Faculty Room, Copy Room, Nurses Office: Surfaces cleaned and disinfected by front desk personnel.

Classrooms: School day cleaning by teacher and students as is usual during a school day.

Disinfection by teachers depending on activity, schedule and circumstance.

Offices: By office occupant

PreK and LS classrooms have sinks for regular handwashing.

MS wing has rest rooms and hand sanitizer dispensers. Signs showing occupancy will be placed on restrooms to avoid crowding.

Art and Science rooms have sinks for handwashing.

When classes are outdoors for longer periods of time, teachers will bring hand sanitizer with them for use during the outdoor activity.

Care will be taken with PreK and LS students, especially, when hand sanitizer is used; soap and water is always the preferred method for hand cleaning.

Cleaning and Disinfection

Classrooms and office areas will be provided with both spray cleaners and spray disinfectant. Both should be used on surfaces, and disinfecting happens after cleaning.

All students will have a water bottle on campus that can be refilled in the sinks. We will close the water fountains until further notice. A water bottle filling station for the middle school wing has been ordered and will be installed after it is delivered.

Areas used by more than one cohort will be cleaned between cohort use. We will minimize the number of these areas in the new school year.

Bathrooms will be segregated by cohort and teachers will organize the number of students using the bathrooms so that they are not crowded. High touch surfaces in bathrooms will be disinfected during the school day and after hours.

Cleaning and Disinfection Following Suspected or Confirmed COVID-19 Case

Parker will follow all state guidelines in the event that there is a confirmed case of someone who has been in the school.

C. Coordination and School Opening

The designated COVID-19 coordinator for the school is the Head of School.

D. Communication Plan

Parker will comply with all requirements for communicating opening plans, This includes:

- Having drafts of the plan read by administrators, teachers, parents and board members for comment
- Seeking recommendations from the District nurse
- Regular participation in weekly meetings with the County Director of Public Health
- Emails to parents regarding procedure changes
- Use of the parent portal (BigSIS) for procedure updates
- Use of the school texting system
- Direct and regular instruction to students about hygiene and distancing procedures, etc.
- Use of Monday Reminders, Snapshot, and other emails for community notices

The Head of School is the point of contact for communication with the public health department and to communicate with the community should the school have a positive COVID case.

Other communications may come from the Director of Communications & Development, the Director of Academics, the Business Manager, and/or the President of the Board of Trustees.

E. Residential Living Considerations

Parker is not a residential school.

III. PROCESSES

A. Screening and Testing

Health Screening and Temperature Checks

Families will submit a health questionnaire daily through an electronic form before leaving for campus or placing their child on a bus.

The screening question will include taking and recording temperature. The school will not keep specific temperature data on individuals but will record “cleared/ not cleared.”

We will limit visitors to campus during the year. However, when a visit is necessary, the front desk staff will screen and take temperatures. The school will not keep specific temperature data on individuals but will record “cleared/ not cleared.” A log will be kept of all visitors, including those who were denied entry. Masks will be available for visitors who do not bring their own face covering. Meetings may take place outdoors to limit visitors inside the building.

Because so many symptoms of COVID-19 are the same as symptoms of milder viruses, we will educate our community about 1) staying home when ill; 2) contacting their health provider and obtaining a test at the earliest sign of a virus; 3) self isolating while they await test results.

Screening questions will include those in the the NYS DOH Guidelines:

- Have you been in close or proximate contact in the past 14 days with anyone who has tested positive for or had symptoms of COVID-19?
- Have you tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 14 days?
- Are you experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19 in the past 14 days, including a temperature greater than 100°F? (CDC symptom list will be updated and made available as part of this screening question.)

Students who are not fully vaccinated are required to quarantine after international travel, per current CDC guidelines.

Positive Screen Protocols

Individuals must disclose if they develop any symptoms during the school day.

Any and all individuals who screen positive for COVID-19 exposure or symptoms while at school will be immediately isolated then sent home and required to contact their health provider for assessment and testing.

Individuals sent home due to positive COVID-19 symptoms or screening will not be able to return to campus without clearance from their health care provider, negative COVID-19 testing, symptom resolution, and release from isolation by the local board of health. Parker will only accept a PCR test as proof of a negative COVID-19 test.

Parker has students and employees from all area counties and the School will work with and notify both the home and Rensselaer County Dept. of Health in order to facilitate contact tracing.

The persons responsible for coordinating screening are the Head of School, the Director of Academics, the Business Manager, the Director of Admissions, and the Front Desk personnel, all in consultation with the Averill Park Central School District nurse assigned to Parker.

Employees and families must notify the Head of School if they receive a positive COVID-19 test. Caregivers should notify the Front Desk if keeping a child home from school because the child is unwell, and explain symptoms and plans to contact the health care provider. Employees should notify the Head of School about symptoms, and the Director of Academics to arrange for class coverage.

In-Person Screening

Screeners will be trained by the Averill Park Central School district nurse and provided with PPE.

A. School Health Offices

The best safeguard against having a COVID-19 positive person on campus is for all families and employees to be earnest and attentive when screening for symptoms before arriving on campus. When in doubt, err on the side of caution, don't come to Parker, and contact your health care provider.

With that said, it is possible that symptoms can develop during the school day. Employees will be sent home immediately if that is the case. Students will be immediately isolated and supervised and caregivers called to pick up the student.

Parker will follow CDC and local guidance for protection of individuals working with students who have COVID-19 symptoms, and for cleaning and disinfection.

Families who have a student requiring nebulizer treatments on campus should notify the Head of School.

A. Tracing and Tracking

Metrics

Parker will work in partnership with the Rensselaer County Dept. of Health should a student or employee test positive for COVID-19.

Outcomes of a positive case may include:

Closing the building and moving the entire program online for a period of time

or

Closing an area of the building and moving a division or cohort online

Families should consistently have a plan in place for when and if the program moves online. In all likelihood, Parker will not be able to give notice very far in advance.

Notification

Parker will follow NYS and local guidelines and laws and notify health departments of positive cases.

Tracing Support

Parker will support and cooperate on all work of NYS and local health departments in contact tracing. We will maintain confidentiality as required by state and federal law.

Quarantine, Isolation, and Return to School

Isolation and quarantine are implemented and monitored by NYS and local health departments. If a student or employee has been notified by a health department that they must quarantine, the Head of School must be notified as soon as possible.

Parker will develop a plan for independent instruction on a case-by-case basis and as the individual's health makes possible.

Before returning to campus, the individual must provide proof that they are cleared to do so, in accordance with state and local regulations and guidelines.

Vaccination Requirements

All faculty and administrators are required to be vaccinated for the 2021-22 school year.

IV. SUBMISSION OF SCHOOL PLANS

This plan was developed in conjunction with guidance from the New York State Department of Health and the New York State Department of Education. Drafts of this plan were read and commented on by members of the board, administrators, teachers, parents and members of the board of trustees.

We all must bear in mind that the COVID-19 public health emergency requires attention to guidance updates. As these become available, this plan will be modified and updated.

Sept 3, 2021